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10-1/2 ORIGINATOR

DECLASSIFICATION DATE: MAR 14 2000

REQUIRES CONCURRENCE

OF USC, DSS, State
MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

9 May 1961
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IN THIS DOCUMENT 2/1/00 VEH

Subject: Summary of White House Meetings

23 Jan 61

1. At this meeting the President was given the general concept for the Trinidad operation and directed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff evaluate the plan from a military viewpoint.

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17 Feb 61

2. Mr. Bissell discussed the status of planning and preparations. Mr. Bissell also discussed necessity for a decision concerning the surfacing of political leadership. Mr. Rusk discussed the fact that it would be much better to delay any action and to attempt to build up OAS support. He was concerned about charge of aggression in UN. Mr. Berle believed that support could be generated in Latin America but not by 31 March. The President asked if there was anything he could do to develop a political position to support action such as a speech on traditional liberalism in the western hemisphere. He also asked if there was any way the build up of jets and rockets in Cuba could be linked to this operation. Mr. Bohlen expressed the view that Russia would not react if the operation was finished quickly but might react if it dragged on. The President indicated that he would be in favor of a more moderate approach to the problem such as mass infiltration. No definite decisions were reached at this meeting.

11 Mar 61

3. At a meeting with the President, CIA presented a paper which summarized preparations to date for the Trinidad operation. After full discussion, the President stated that he was willing to take the chance of going ahead, that he could not endorse a plan that put us in so openly in view of the world situation. He directed the development of a plan where the assistance would be less obvious and would have to meet again within the next few days.

15 Mar 61

4. At this meeting the Zapata plan was presented to the President and a full-length discussion of it followed.

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The President expressed the belief that uprisings all along the island would be better than to concentrate and strike. The President asked how soon it was intended to break out from this area and Mr. Bissell stated that not before about D-10. The President was also concerned about ability to extricate the force. The President did not like the idea of the dawn landing and felt that in order to make this appear as an inside guerrilla-type operation, the ships should be clear of the area by dawn. He directed that this planning be reviewed and another meeting be held the following morning.

16 Mar 61

5. At meeting with the President, CIA presented revised concepts for the landing at Zapata wherein there would be air drops at first light with the landing at night and all of the ships away from the objective area by dawn. The President decided to go ahead with the Zapata planning; to see what we could do about increasing support to the guerrillas inside the country; to interrogate one member of the force to determine what he knows; and he reserved the right to call off the plan even up to 24 hours prior to the landing.

29 Mar 61

6. Mr. Bissell discussed the results of photo reconnaissance, the possible use of a small diversionary force of 150 and a plan to obtain key defections. The President inquired whether there had been any statements by Castro indicating knowledge of the plan and answer was in the negative. Mr. Bissell presented the plan as to the disposal of the force in the event the operation was cancelled. The general idea was to bring the force into Belle Chose, debris them, give them food and then release them, who would be confined at some other training base. The President also expressed whether the force could fade into the brush and not look like a failure and also the possibilities of diverting the force while still at sea. Mr. Bissell indicated that if the operation failed, the force would probably have to be withdrawn. At this meeting the tentative D-Day of 5 April was postponed and the next tentative date set as 10 April. The next decision meeting was set as 4 April.

4 Apr 61

7. This meeting was held in the State Department and Senator Fulbright was also present. Senator Fulbright

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spoke out against the plan. The President again indicated his preference for an operation which would infiltrate the force in units of 200-250 and then develop them through a build up. Colonel Hawkins from CIA expressed the belief that landing small groups would merely serve to alert Castro and they would be eliminated one by one. He indicated that a group of 200 was below the critical number able to defend themselves. Mr. Rusk expressed opposition to the plan but Mr. Berle and Mr. Mann expressed general approval. Mr. McNamara also expressed approval of the general concept. The President indicated that he still wished to make the operation appear as an internal uprising and wished to consider the matter further the next morning.

5 Apr 61

8. There was a very small meeting with the President where only Secretary McNamara, General Lemnitzer and representatives of State and CIA were present. At this meeting the general idea of fake defections and preliminary strikes were discussed. The President indicated approval of the general idea but indicated that everyone should consider further measures overnight and there would be another meeting the following morning.

6 Apr 61

9. At this meeting Mr. Eischell presented the plan to arrest Mrs. Fares, to seize a B-25 aircraft known to be operating against Cuba and also to seize one or more small ports being used by counter-revolutionaries. All of this intended to show US dissociation with former Batista followers. Mr. Eischell then gave an outline of the planned defection of a pilot on B-25, contact with air studies and a D-2 command landing. This would then be followed by a guerrilla force on B-5 and other aircraft. The President indicated that the council should not be informed ahead of time. Mr. Eischell, when queried by the President, stated that he felt that this plan was as good as could be devised, but that we should now go to a look at other questions that might arise. One would be what would the US do in the event there was a strike, call or help? Second, what might the Soviets do? The President indicated that Mr. Eischell had been informed of the prospect. The President questioned whether or not a preliminary strike wasn't an alternative. The President also asked as to the last date at which he could delay or cancel the operation, and he was told 16 April. He wanted to know what he could do if the operation was called off.

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and was told by Mr. Bissell that the plan was to divert the force to Vieques. At the end of the meeting the President gave the following guidance: continue planning, spread the convoy, provide additional air protection for the Miami area, increase press conferences for Cardona, limit air strikes to essential targets, and diversionary landing was OK. In summary, the President indicated a desire to use the force but he wanted to do everything possible to make it appear to be a Cuban operation partly from within Cuba but supported from without Cuba, the objective being to make it more plausible for US denial of association with the operation although recognizing that we would be accused.

12 Apr 61

10. At this meeting CIA presented a paper which outlined the latest changes for the Zapata operation including the defections and air strikes on D-2. Many questions were discussed concerning training of additional forces, statements, if any, on D-2 operations, how to prevent headlines, and acceleration of internal troubles. The President stressed the necessity for non-association with the US and directed that all training activities being conducted within the US should stop. He was informed that go time for preliminary operations would be 1200, Friday, 14 April, and for the main landing 1200, Sunday, 16 April.

David W. Gray
 DAVID W. GRAY
 Major General, USA
 Chief, Subsidiary Activities
 Division, J-5